



Providing Toys
For Children In Need
During The Holidays

T&G SANTA

*With the holiday season upon us, it's time to think about
the Telegram & Gazette Santa Fund.*

Celebrating its 80th year, the T&G Santa Fund collects thousands of donations from generous readers and area residents to help buy toys for children in need in Central Massachusetts.

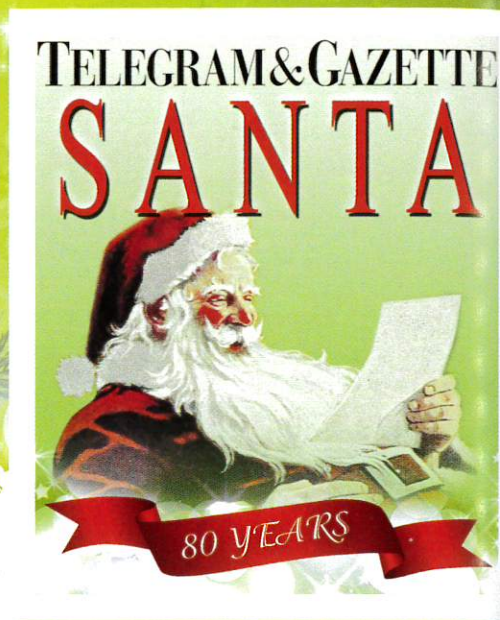
Last year, the community donated more than \$150,000 providing toys to thousands of children across Central Massachusetts.

Many thanks to every contributor to the T&G Santa Fund.

Please consider a contribution today.

Happy Holidays!

telegram.com/santa



TELEGRAM & GAZETTE
telegram.com



DESIGN FOR LIVING

*Furniture legacy of Gardner takes front
seat in show at Fitchburg Art Museum*

BY NANCY SHEEHAN + PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLAN JUNG

There was a time not too long ago when Gardner, known as "The Chair City," had a leg up on all the furniture-making competition. Although a variety of economic factors have since conspired to unseat the city in the chair hierarchy, an old sign on the outskirts still

proclaims Gardner as "The Furniture Capital of the World."

It's a hollow boast these days, but the city-defining power of the once-thriving furniture industry has left a lasting legacy, and Gardner still counts among its residents many people who proudly worked for years, and often decades, in its mills.

A new show at Fitchburg Art Museum pays homage to that legacy with artists using it as a stepping off point for a look at how furniture reflects our cultural traditions, values and mores. "Interior Effects: Furniture in Contemporary Art," which opened Sept. 23, features the work of 10 New

CONTINUED ON PAGE 85



ABOVE: Jeff Warmouth of Groton and his son, Ben, 7, view Liz Shepherd's "Untitled (Blue), 2005," part of "Interior Effects: Furniture in Contemporary Art" on exhibition at Fitchburg Art Museum.

LEFT: A three-legged chair, c. 1960, courtesy of the Gardner Museum.



Museum director Nick Capasso offers words of welcome at the opening reception in September.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 83

England artists who explore, through furniture-inspired artwork, themes as wide-ranging as gender, equality and the effects interior spaces have on the humans who occupy them.

The show is the second in a series of three exhibitions the museum is doing that link contemporary art with the region's industrial heritage. Two years ago, FAM did a show called "Plastic

Imagination," in which all the art was made of plastic in honor of this region's Leominster-based plastics industry.

The current exhibition honors Gardner, which held the title of furniture capital of the world for a hundred years. Two years from now, the museum will do an exhibition on innovative uses of paper, in recognition of Fitchburg's heritage as a paper town.

As is the aim with all three shows, "Interiors Effects" is much more than a mere historical documentation of Gardner's illustrious furniture-making past. "The show is beautiful, elegantly presented and, for a show about furniture, it is surprisingly evocative emotionally and very thought-provoking," Nick Capasso, FAM's director, said. "It's not your standard furniture

CONTINUED ON PAGE 86



Clarkie Stedman's Miniature version of the Big Chair, produced for the Gardner Chamber of Commerce, courtesy of the Gardner Museum.



TOP: Artist Liz Shepherd and "Hers & His: 2018."
ABOVE: Kayla Bertucci of Fitchburg, left, and Rebecca Landry of Leominster view Samantha Fields' "The Venus of Ramsdale, 2018."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85

showroom, that's for sure."

That's because FAM Curator Lisa Crossman strove to push the show beyond the mundane by selecting artists who had a deeper focus in connection with furniture either directly, with unusual-but-functional pieces, or metaphorically, with work that uses everyday household furnishings as a launching point.

Samantha Fields of Brockton, for example, used insight and skills gained from an internship at Kohler, the Midwestern plumbing-fixture giant, for her towering, abstract and very pink piece "Venus of Ramsdale," a reference to the town that was the setting for the novel "Lolita." The novel was considered scandalous when it was published in the 1950s for exploring sexual-identity themes and taboos that still resonate today.

The cast porcelain chair legs that underpin Fields' piece support waves of pink ruffles and stitched sculptures that call attention to ideas of gender, class and a woman's traditional role as a passive homemaker. The materials are a mix of

domestic fabrics, trims and a prom dress, all of which provide visual cues that invite us to think of the things we associate with each of them.

"The crocheted lace we might associate with home, maybe with a grandmother," Fields said, during the show's opening reception in September. "Some of the trim that's on the skirt is underwear lace, and there's also some lace that you would find on a small girl's dress. So, all of it, if you look for it, is coded in some way, and I'm really interested in what happens when you put those things next to each other."

That's just the kind of layered approach to the furniture theme that Crossman was looking for when she set out many months ago on a series of studio visits to select artists for the show.

"I really wanted to focus on how

furniture can read as a psychologically charged metaphor," she said. "Furniture shapes the spaces we live in. It's presumed to reflect our taste. It can reflect class. It can reflect gender, and then there are all these emotions and ideas that we project onto furniture as well because of the anthropomorphic form. The more I started to research it, the more interesting it became."

The more practical facets of furniture is explored by Tracie Pouliot of Gardner, who has been working on a grant-funded project that runs several years in which she seeks to preserve the oral histories of people who worked at the Nichols & Stone factory, one of Gardner's biggest furniture manufacturers. The city has yet to fully recover from the financial and emotional hit it took when Nichols & Stone closed in 2008 after more than 150 years of

producing high-quality furniture.

Pouliot, who worked at Nichols & Stone summers during college, has a storefront in Gardner where former employees gather to produce lovely, often moving biographical booklets on a letterpress that she has there. Some of the booklets are on display in "Interior Effects."

"It's an honor to be in the show and have the stories of working-class people, these books that are made by the community, in a museum," Pouliot said. "These aren't artists that are coming in to make them. They're people who worked in the industry."

Pouliot's letterpress project renders an important part of Gardner's history accessible to generations growing up after most of the mills had closed. "We have a lot of high school and college students come in who get to learn a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 88

IMAGINE A BETTER YOU



She did it. You can too!

(508) 754-4000
www.drfechner.com

Dr. Fechner MD
PLASTIC SURGERY & MEDICAL SPA



WM0000372785-01



*"Not a cruise ship ...
Briarwood is home."*

ARE YOU READY?

To make the most of life with warm, caring friends? • To let someone else take care of maintenance? • To maintain your independence and sense of adventure? To experience the strength of a shared community of people?

VISIT US!

65 Briarwood Circle, Worcester, MA 01606
Call 508-852-2670 • www.BriarwoodRetirement.com

A non-profit, non-denominational senior living community for 33 years.
Cottages, Apartments, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing for rehabilitation & extended care.

WM0000372787-01

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 87

lot directly from people who worked in the factory and what it meant to them," she said.

Artist Liz Shepherd of Boston melds the historical aspects of the local furniture industry with the ideas she sees as represented by the pieces and, especially, the catalogs used to promote them. Her work in the show actually comprises many pieces — oversized images of upholstered chairs, loveseats and other traditional furnishings that take up an entire wall. The pieces would look very familiar to many of us, like the comfortable, attractive but unassuming furniture we grew up with before glitzy interior design became the competitive decorating sport it now seems to be.

"I was inspired by Lisa Crossman's description of what they were trying to do here, which is to honor Gardner and the whole furniture industry in New England," Shepherd said. "So I just did the research. I went to the Gardner Museum (in Gardner, not the Boston one) and I spoke to the curator, and I looked at the catalogs."

In the old catalogs she found pictures of furniture from the Heywood-Wakefield Co., which had been a big furniture manufacturer in the area. "I was just really inspired by the text because it said things like, 'This chair is for the man's room where he can go do his thinking' — you know, man thoughts — 'And this chair is where the lady of the house goes to think her little lady thoughts.'"

The surprisingly gendered ad copy about furniture may seem like it's from the 1950s or even much earlier, but the catalog Shepherd quotes as part of her work on display was from 1973. "This was not 100 years ago, where people thought that men think and that women sort of, you know, just sort of doodle and dabble and don't do anything really that important," she said.

The show runs through Jan. 13, 2019. "Behind the Scenes," a closing tour with FAM's Terrana Curatorial Fellow Candice Bancheri, will be held at 2 p.m. Jan. 13.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Volunteer Jay Carrier works with moveable type in the Chair City Community Workshop. Individual letters are placed on a composing stick, building paragraphs letter by letter to later be printed. | Woodcuts of iconic Nichols & Stone furniture are printed in the books made by the Chair City Community Workshop. | Tracie Pouliot sews books by hand in the Chair City Community Workshop. Some of the books are included in the FAM exhibition. | The handmade books tell the stories of workers at the former Nichols & Stone furniture factory. | Mike Pouliot, left, and Denis Boucher were both plant managers at Nichols & Stone and both men have a book written about them. They catch up while signing stacks of the handmade books in the Chair City Community Workshop. [PHOTOS/RICK CINCLAIR]

